

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 TRSE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3979

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM CI
SUBJECT: HUNGER STRIKE CONTINUING

REF: SANTIAGO 3901

1. FIVE MORE PEOPLE JOINED THE 62 ALREADY ENGAGED IN A HUNGER STRIKE DEMANDING THAT THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT SATISFACTORILY EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED TO NEXT-OF-KIN WHO DISAPPEARED. THE NEW PARTICIPANTS ENTERED THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS OFFICES THE MORNING OF MAY 25. THE OTHERS, AT THE LOCAL UNICEF HEADQUARTERS AND IN THREE CHURCHES, REMAIN IN GOOD HEALTH.

2. SPOKESPERSONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS (MOST OF WHOM ARE WOMEN) SAY THAT THE PROTEST WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE GOC PRODUCES FACTS, NOT PROMISES, ABOUT THE DISAPPEARED. THEY ARE PREPARED TO STAY "INDEFINITELY" ACCORDING TO SOME OF THE WOMEN. MEANWHILE A STATEMENT FROM THE SANTIAGO ARCHBISHOPRIC DENIED THAT THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY HAD "COORDINATED, PLANNED OR ORGANIZED" THE HUNGER STRIKE; AND IT OBSERVED THAT THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR HAD SO FAR FAILED TO RESPOND TO THE CHURCH'S REQUEST FOR A MEETING. IT ALSO REPEATED VERBATIM THE VICARS' MAY 8
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DECLARATION (REFTEL) THAT THE RELATIVES HAD A LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO DEMAND OF COMPETENT AUTHORITIES A CLARIFICATION OF THE DISAPPEAREDS' FATE.

3. PRESS COVERAGE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY ANTAGONISTIC TO THE STRIKERS. GOC-OWNED "EL CRONISTA" ATTRIBUTED THE PROTEST TO "CIA AND VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY" COLLUSION IN

A FRONTPAGE HEADLINE LISTING OTHER "EVIDENCE OF U.S. PERSECUTION OF CHILE". "EL CRONISTA'S" INSIDE STORIES LOST ANY SEMBLANCE OF NEWS ITEMS. NOWHERE IN THE PAPER, HOWEVER, WAS THERE ANY MENTION OF ALLEGED CIA INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROTEST.

4. COMMENT: THIS HUNGER STRIKE COULD BE MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN THE ECLA TAKEOVER A YEAR AGO AND THE BRIEF ONE HELD AT YEAREND. BOTH SIDES GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF HAVING DUG IN FOR A PROTRACTED SIEGE. WE ASSUMED FROM INTERNATIONAL PRESS ACCOUNTS THAT "SYMPATHY" HUNGER STRIKES WILL BE HELD ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD AND, FROM FBIS MONITORING OF RADIO MOSCOW, THAT THE COMMUNISTS INTEND TO MAKE THIS A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENT.

5. THE RELATIVES' GROUP IS SENSITIVE TO CHARGES THAT THE PROTEST IS A "SHOW" DESIGNED TO ELICIT INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. IT HAS SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED TOURING THE SANTIAGO DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT AS THE RELATIVES HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. THEY HAVE BEEN GUARDED AND RESERVED DURING OUR TELEPHONE CONTACTS AND, IN SPITE OF PROMISES TO HAVE SOMEONE STOP BY, NO ONE HAS APPEARED. ONE SCANDINAVIAN DIPLOMAT WITH WHOM WE SPOKE ALSO REMARKED AT THE ABSENCE OF DIRECT CONTACT.

6. THE POLITICAL SYMPATHIES OF AT LEAST A CORE GROUP OF THE RELATIVES ARE CLEAR; THEY WERE IMPLACABLY OPPOSED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THIS REGIME EVEN BEFORE THEIR HUSBANDS AND FATHERS WERE TAKEN AWAY TO WHAT WAS SURELY A MISERABLE DEATH AT THE HANDS OF GOC SECURITY AGENTS. IT DOES NOT SURPRISE US THEN THAT THE COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA MACHINE HAS BEEN MOBILIZED ON THEIR BEHALF NOR THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD TAKE CREDIT FOR SETTING THE PROTEST IN MOTION. INDEED, IT MAY HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN ORGANIZING THE STRIKE. "GROUP OF TEN" (DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION IST) LEADERS, STATING THAT THE STRIKE WAS COMMUNIST-ORIENTED, CAREFULLY AVOIDED CONTACT BETWEEN RELATIVES OF THE DIS-APPEARED AND AFL-CIO LEADERS HERE ON A SOLIDARITY VISIT. ON ONE OCCASION THEY WHISKED THEM OUT A BACK DOOR INTO WAITING CARS SO THEY COULD NOT HAVE TO RUN THE GAUNTLET OF RELATIVES GATHERED OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE.

7. IT IS EASY TO EXAGGERATE THE COMMUNIST ANGLE. WHATEVER THE POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS OF SOME OF THE RELATIVES, THE PRINCIPAL EMOTION OF MOST OF THOSE WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN OVER THE YEARS HAS IN-CREASINGLY BECOME ONE OF FRUSTRATION AND VENGEANCE. AT FIRST, OF COURSE, MANY HOPED THEIR RELATIVES MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE AND RESCUEABLE IF ENOUGH PRESSURE WERE

APPLQED. NOW FEVERENTLY THE TORTURERS IDENTIFIED.
THEY WERE BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED THAT NEITHER THE CARDINAL
NOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS CAME OUT AGAINST THE ASPECTS
OF THE APRIL AMENSTY WHICH COVERED CRIMES PREDOMINATELY
COMMITTED BY THE SECURITY SERVICES (E.G. HOMICIDE AND KID-
NAPPING).
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